Transcultural and Transnational Connections in Neapolitan Song during the Colonial Period. Raffaele Viviani's "'O tripulino napulitano" (1925) as Case Study

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Summary

This article analyzes the perception and representation of alterity in Neapolitan song, with a specific focus on Raffaele Viviani's "'O tripulino napulitano" (1925). My interest in this lesser-known work is twofold: first, it attests to the perception of Libyans during fascist colonialism and to the ways in which Italians negotiate their identity through an intimate relationship with North African people; second, it anticipates some elements found in later Neapolitan song production, namely Renato Carosone's "Tu vuò fa' l'americano", "Caravan petrol", "'O Pellirossa", and "Torero". However, unlike Carosone, Viviani does not limit his *macchietta*-style portrayal to a list of stereotypes. The lyrics proclaim a shared condition of subalternity with the North Africans unveiling a transcultural approach that emerges in later Neapolitan works starting from the mid-1970s.

Introduction

The perception and representation of alterity has been at the center of recent scholarly debate due to the intensification of migratory trends in the Mediterranean and beyond. The topic received critical attention starting from the analysis of the "intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture" (Said 1978, 27) in the context of colonialism in Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* (1978). Recognized as a foundational text for Postcolonial Studies, Said's investigation initiated a fruitful debate that went far beyond the specific object of his analysis, challenging the concept of cultural identity itself. If the examination of the Palestinian-American theorist relies on the binary opposition Self/Other as supported by the intellectual hegemonic system promoted by colonialism, further analysis questioned the old paradigm of culture intended as a closed sphere, internally homogeneous and separated from the outside. In his examination of the complexity and inner differentiation of modern cultures characterized by high levels of hybridity, German philosopher Wolfgang

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Welsch offers a deeper insight into the notion of culture in general observing that all cultures in any historical period go through processes of encounters, entanglements, and hybridization that question "the contraposition of ownness and foreignness" (Welsch 1999, 196). Colonialism has instrumentally cultivated and defended the idea of cultural identity based on the contrast between the Self and the Other, and most importantly defining the Self through a process of demeaning and denial of the Other. However, the close contact with different cultures promoted by the colonial expansion did not leave the elements of contact unaltered promoting instead a process of hybridization that Welsch (1999) defines through the concept of transculturality.

For its specific geographic position suspended between the East and the West, at the intersection of different countries and ethnicities, the Mediterranean offers a striking example of transculturality, opening to a vibrant exchange and fluid interaction between cultures. For the purpose of my contribution within the Mediterranean I focus on Naples, a unique, lively harbor city that "has known more than its fair share of strangers, of rarely invited foreigners" (Chambers 2003, 25), considered an exemplary locus for cultural hybridity expressed through an extraordinary artistic production where song occupies a primary place. Neapolitan song, recognized as an important element of Italian identity, embodies a distinctive profile "for its extraordinary ability to blend musical styles and sounds from various national and ethnic traditions" (Scuderi 2010, 619).

My analysis focuses on Neapolitan songs based on the representation of characters from other cultures, namely those inspired by the ironic and satirical portraits of the *macchietta napoletana*, a parodistic and satirical monologue developed from 17th Century comic literature and established in the variety theatre of the 19th and 20th Century. The main object of my investigation is a less-known work by playwright, actor and songwriter Raffaele Viviani "'O tripulino napulitano" (1925).[2] Written in the context of Italian colonial rule in Libya during the fascist period, the song offers a vivid testimony of how Italians perceived Libyans and how they renegotiated their own identity through their cultural encounter with North African people. From the specific perspective of the modality of the illustration of characters from other cultures in Neapolitan songs, Viviani anticipates elements that will emerge in the particularly successful output of Renato Carosone in the 1950s: "Tu vuò fa' l'americano", "Caravan petrol", "'O Pellirossa", and "Torero". Additionally, Viviani's song furthers the dichotomy Self/Other engaged in Carosone's lyrics by expressing the consciousness of a shared condition of subalternity with Libyans that reveals a transcultural approach.

The present work is divided into two sections: after a brief introduction on Viviani, the first section analyzes the song from a postcolonial perspective scrutinizing how it expresses the perception of Libyans during Italian colonialism under the fascist regime, and how Italians negotiate their identity through a close contact with the North African people; the second section, through a comparative approach, offers insights into similarities and differences between Viviani's and Carosone's songs indicating the former as a model for the latter but also revealing a different attitude toward the representation of the culture of the Other.

Raffaele Viviani: a brief overview

Raffaele Viviani (1888-1950) is a remarkably influential Neapolitan playwright, actor, poet, and musician active in the first half of the 20th Century. His career started in the variety theatre, where he achieved widespread popularity, and, after the shutdown of *variété* playhouse at the beginning of the century, he devoted himself to writing dramas for the theatre developing a unique style. In his plays elements of dramatic theatre blend together with ingredients of the variety theatre: the self-contained disconnected sections of the latter ('numeri'), which include songs, dances and acting, are organically integrated into the plot, making a coherent unit (Venturini 2002, 284-285). Viviani was able to re-define the dramatic language from a more modern perspective through a process of contamination between comedy and tragedy, speech and singing, tradition and modernity (Sommaiolo 2003, 374). Vivani's work is focused on the social protest of the urban underclass, his characters are peddlers, prostitutes, circus actors, street urchins, fishermen. The themes of his plays are unemployment, emigration, social conflict, poverty, alienation. In his theatre Viviani gives voice to the affliction, the misery, the drama of Neapolitans, previously stereotyped as lighthearted, funny, entertaining, comic people without struggles. After the first world war Naples faced a difficult economic situation with high levels of unemployment, and precariousness was a daily struggle to fight. People often made a living with expedients and came up with creative jobs to survive hunger. However, "his characters are pervaded by a healthy optimism, which does not lead to despair, but to a gloomy resignation that becomes the strength to move forward and be able to ironize about the almost always adverse fate" (cf. Massa s. a.; trad. I. A.). In many of his plays Naples is the protagonist, with his extraordinary humanity populating the streets, the squares, the alley, the festivals. The language that he uses is the Neapolitan dialect in all of its many nuances, from the one spoken by the lower classes to the more refined version used by the aristocracy. For these reasons Viviani is considered an exemplary witness of his time and his city. His success in the new genre starts with *'O vico* (*The Alley*) in 1917, and other highlights include his most notable work, *Via Toledo by Night*, inspired by the renowned popular street of Naples which is a symbol of the vivacity of the city, and *L'ultimo scugnizzo* (*The Last Boy*) that portrays a Neapolitan street kid.

In Viviani's theatre, music holds a special place, employed to portray both the setting and the characters. For the music, as well as for the text, he engages and blends together multiple sources: folksongs, lullabies, street voices, popular music, music for the stage (*variété*, opera and operetta). From the variety theatre he borrows and develops the genre of the *macchietta*, a parodistic monologue that portrays a character by insisting on his most distinctive features, concisely drafted through the cooperation of multiple elements (music, singing, acting). From the *macchietta* Viviani derives the typical variegated use of the voice to interpret multiple characters, as well as rapid passages from talking to singing. His ability to portray outdoor spaces lends to his work a unique imprint: he selects distinctive noises and sounds from the street and uses them to recreate an evocative soundscape that becomes an integral part of the play. Differently from the variety theatre, Viviani gives the music a

more central role that goes beyond the simple function of accompaniment. In Viviani's plays the music carries an extra layer of meaning completing the illustration of the characters. Self-taught in all his artistic talents, Vivani used to work with composers/arrangers for the musical component of his works, among them Enrico Cannio and Pasquale Lanzetta. Referring to his practice of singing, whistling, or humming a melody to a musician to fix it on the score and create an arrangement, Pasquale Scialò labelled the Neapolitan playwright "un melodista non trascrittore". An eclectic artist, Viviani's songs are written by combining pre-existing elements, ready-made materials from the oral tradition or from the scene, and re-composing them (Scialò 2006, 10-11). For this reason he is considered "one of the most prolific Italian stage music composers in the first half of the twentieth century", some of them becoming well known for being performed by prestigious interpreters such as Nino Taranto, Roberto Murolo, Elvira Donnarumma (Scialò 2006, 6).

Viviani's theatrical works evolve through the years from the perspectives of language, music, setting and themes. From the use of an authentic dialect spoken by the marginalized lower classes in the works of the first period (1917-1920) he starts to include the Italian language in the 1920s and 30s. The presence of music in his plays progressively decreases, from its massive presence in the beginning to focusing on a few themes or songs for each play becoming a sort of *leitmotiv*. The setting becomes more generalized: from the precise localization of the first years, the reference shifts to communities, more abstract 'worlds' like the family, the countryside, the circus (Viviani 1992); among the themes of his works, unemployment becomes prominent starting from the 1920s.

Viviani reached the highest peak of his notoriety during the second and third decade of the twentieth century when he was also invited to perform abroad in Latin America and North Africa as a distinguished ambassador of the Italian theatre; in 1931 he was nominated "grande ufficiale della Corona d'Italia" for his outstanding work as actor, playwright, and poet. However, his success started to lessen in the late 1930s when the changed political climate negatively impacted on his activity. During fascism his poetic vision based on the representation of the social condition of the lower classes contrasted with the official State rhetoric that aimed to create consensus toward the fascist government. Further obstacles came from the regime's condemn of minority languages and dialects in name of the pursue of a linguistic unification, that resulted in banning the use of dialect in any public context. Moreover, a long illness during the years immediately after the War slowed down his activity progressively isolating him from the scenes. Viviani died in 1950 leaving an invaluable legacy to the national and European theatre (Venturini 200, 84-85).

"'O tripulino napulitano": colonial representations in Neapolitan song

As Viviani declared in his memoir in 1925, he visited Tripoli, the capital of Libya, for a performance at Teatro Miramare with his company (Viviani 1988, 91-94). At that time, since 1911, Libya was an Italian colonial possession, regarded by the fascist regime for its

proximity to the motherland and for being the repository of a common past during the Roman era. Located in the Mediterranean basin, it was labeled "La quarta sponda", the "Forth Shore" of Italy, depicted as an extension of the motherland and as a "promised land" for Italians' pressing problems of unemployment: under fascism thousands of Italians were encouraged to migrate to Libya with the promise of a job and a better life.

In line with the other colonial powers of the modern era, the Italian government very intentionally introduced potent emblems of Italian culture to their colonial possessions, including opera houses and concert halls. Considered the 'shopwindow' of Italian colonialism, a touristic apparatus was established in Libya by the regime to promote Italian prestige abroad and a network of cruises was developed to bring visitors from Europe and the motherland, including Naples. Artists from the homeland were invited to perform in these freshly minted cultural institutions to entertain the newly arrived Italian migrants, fascist officials, as well as tourists (Abbonizio 2011). However, the North African country, initially presented as an appealing, rich territory, full of opportunity and resources that only needed to be nurtured from the expert hands of the colonizer, soon revealed itself as an arid and hostile land, difficult to cultivate.

The colonial experience in Africa, that lasted overall only 60 years, offered to Italians a unique exposure to the African 'otherness' that resonates in the artistic production of the time, including music – a topic that still needs to be further investigated. Exotic cultures from the old continent circulated in Italy through the media, radio, press, recordings, and moving images (documentaries and cinema). Furthermore, the national colonial agenda made the foreign lands more accessible to people, including artists. A racialized perception of the colonial population was disseminated in support of the pretense of Italy's civilizing mission. However, a distinction must be made between the perception of people from Libya and East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia), the two areas of Italian colonialism in Africa. While skin color and a professed absence of history was the primary focus for the representation of East African populations, people from the Mediterranean country, in particular those from coastal zones with less dark complexion , were perceived as closer to Italians, at least Italians from the South, in the name of a common glorious past whose evidence was proudly advertised by the fascist government. The cultural and geographical proximity to the motherland was also manifest in the architecture: as observed by Mia Fuller, "Tripoli's Mediterranean populations (Maltese, Greek, Italian, French, Turkish, and Jewish) confirmed the setting's familiarity, since in this respect also it resembled any number of port cities in Sicily, the Italian peninsula, and the rest of the Mediterranean basin" (Fuller 2007, 151-152).

The Libyan capital of Tripoli, located on the coast, was developed as a cultural center of colonial Italy. Its main institution, Teatro Miramare, was one of the first and probably the most active Italian colonial theatre in Africa. Built in 1921, it went through multiple processes of renovation in 1928 and 1938 following the advancement of the colonial agenda as well as of the evolution of architectural aesthetics (McLaren 2006). During the years of its activity, it hosted Opera, operetta, theatrical performances, and movies. Before the colonial

entertainment industry was more organically managed in mid-1930s, renowned performers from the motherland were invited to perform in the Miramare for special occasions such as the celebration of political events (Abbonizio 2011, 91-95). As Raffaele Viviani writes in his autobiography:

> Andai a Tripoli nel '25, con la mia Compagnia e sbarcai proprio la mattina che ritornava sua Eccellenza il Conte Volpi[3] […]
> Il sole leonino ci batteva in pieno e noi, incuranti di quella canicola, fermi al nostro posto di osservazione, vedemmo sfilare come in una visione di sogno, cavalieri arabi su magnifici cavalli arabi e tarchiati, dalle lunghe criniere, correre dannatamente e nella corsa svolgere evoluzioni sbalorditive. [...]
> Processioni di fachiri colle carni attraversate da coltelli e moltitudini che cantavano all'unisono con urli ritmati e con movenze analoghe seguivano divinità portate a spalla da Marabuth: l'incessante suono dei molteplici *tam-tam*, mentre quello del Makrone, specie di zampogna a forma di pipe, formava una nenia che definiva e metteva in risalto tutto il mistico dell'ambiente. [...]
> La sera assistemmo al teatro alla serata patriottica in onore del Governatore; la vasta sala del Miramar [sic] era rigurgitante di ufficialità. Capi notabili arabi e truppa di terra e di mare, tutti in un insieme fantasmagorico e pittoresco. [...]
> La sera della mia beneficiata ebbi l'onore e la gradita sorpresa di vedermi il conte Volpi in teatro con Signora e Signorine ed io mi elettrizzai per tanta fortuna: recitai, anzi recitammo con tutta l'anima la commedia di Corsi e Salvini: *Quello che il pubblico non sa* e al mio numero a solo, S. E. si divertì un mondo e non abbandonò il teatro che a spettacolo completamente finito. Tutti mi comunicarono soddisfatti il loro sincero contento ed io ne fui, si capisce, tanto lieto e commosso. (Viviani 1988, 91-93)

Possibly on the occasion of his visit to Tripoli, Viviani composed a new song titled "'O tripulino napulitano" (1925). Acclaimed at the Piedigrotta festival, where it was performed on August 23rd 1925 (cf. Anonimo 3 1925), the song was published by the Neapolitan publisher Gennarelli.[4] The work was originally included in the second of three acts of the play *I novantanove lupi*, written in collaboration with Onorato Castellino. While the comedy was lukewarmly received by the audience[5] and remained unpublished, the song was immediately a success and achieved widespread popularity in the Neapolitan scene as an autonomous work. Repeatedly performed, it eventually entered the repertoire of renowned singer Nino Taranto.

As suggested in the title, the lyrics portray a Neapolitan visiting Tripoli, a circumstance that, based on the parodistic attitude of Neapolitans, easily recalls the theatrical flair of the work, written in the style of the *macchietta*.[6] The varied use of the voice is also strictly connected to the original inspiration of the song as scene music: Viviani shows a unique ability of quickly shifting from singing to speech, and from a lyrical melismatic tone to a dry and plain one, a strategy that helps in drafting the multiple aspects of the personality

of the character, comic and dramatic at the same time. The song is sung in the first person, and it depicts a Neapolitan hawker in Tripoli. It opens with an imaginary dialogue with an interlocutor inquiring about the provenance of the man, unveiling his attempt to blend in among the local population of Arabs and Jewish. It is worth noting from the perspective of colonial/postcolonial studies, that Viviani doesn't set the song in Naples or in one of the picturesque quarters of the city, as in most of his songs and plays, but in Tripoli confirming how during the colonial period Libya was seen as an extension of the motherland. Furthermore, the lyrics present several references to colonial stereotypes and rhetorical elements of the colonial discourse based on racial bias.

As typical in Viviani, the song does not present a standard song-form: after verse and refrain, he adds an additional section that offers an important insight into the interpretation of the work.

The first stanzas describe the challenges that the vendor faces to be accepted by the locals ("'Mmiez'a ll'arabe, all'ebreie / rappresento o' rinnegato"), and his efforts in hiding his identity ("Ma I'mme guardo 'e fatte mieie / Senza maie fa' suspetta'"); his ambiguous position of Neapolitan would-be Tripolitan makes him feel like a traitor ("Si ce sta qualche ribelle, / o denunzio o' brigadiere. / Nun è bello stu mestiere, / Ma p"a patria se pò fa'").

Starting from the last stanzas before the first refrain, the lyrics insist on the contrast between the two cultures, Italian/Neapolitan and Libyan, through conflicting elements, commencing with the faith: "Ma, dicenno 'a litania, / Prego a Dio, no a Mooammed". The dichotomy Self/Other is further reinforced in the refrain, which is entirely built on a list of distinctive features of the Arabs' environment, behavior, and fashion, condemned from the perspective of an outsider. Moreover, while the music of the verse gives to the lyrics a story-telling tone, in the refrain Viviani elicits a more parodistic character: each sentence is followed by an imitation of the recurring invocation to Allah in the Muslim call to worship, as heard in outdoor spaces in Arab cities and towns ("Alle alle alle alle"). The humoristic device is also accentuated by the use of the given word in a mono-rhyme ("-alle"). As indicated by Pasquale Scialò, Viviani often sets his plays in outdoor spaces exhibiting a unique ability to depict the environment by using selected sounds from the oral tradition that are functional to the effective description of the context (Scialò 2010, 274-284).

After building a strong opposition Self/Other highlighted by a comic tone, the song casts a new section that functions as an 'interlude' with a powerful semantic value that represents an important unveiling moment within the purpose of my analysis. Here the Neapolitan vendor intones an open-hearted confession of a shared social condition with the Libyans:

Nun vulimmo niente 'a vuje	We don't ask anything of you
ccà 'e sfruttate simme nuje.	we are the ones who are exploited.
Vuie succhiate e nuie simme 'a balia:	You are suckling and we're breastfeeding:
tutte cose vene 'a l'Italia.	Everything comes from the motherland.

Chesta è proprio la nostra rabbia:	This is our anger:
vuie tenite surtanto sabbia.	The only thing you have is sand.
Nun bastava 'a famma nosta,	As if our hunger was not enough,
ce vuleva pure 'a vosta.	Now we also have to take care of yours.

In this part of the song Viviani acknowledges a common frustration towards the colonial territory that circulated in the motherland. If Libya was initially advertised as a definitive solution to Italians' financial and unemployment problems, the presence of vast deserted areas in the country made the conditions of Italian migrants considerably difficult. Moreover, such condition of aridity of the territory substantially impacted the economic investment of the colonizer in the development of the country ("Nun vulimmo niente 'a vuje / ccà 'e sfruttate simme nuje"). The early colonial stereotype of Libya as a dry and empty 'scatolone di sabbia', big sandbox, as defined by Gaetano Salvemini in 1911, is also mentioned in the text ("Chesta è proprio la nostra rabbia: / vuie tenite surtanto sabbia"). As I will observe in the next paragraph, the two stanzas object of my attention show how Neapolitans/Southern Italians negotiate their identity through close contact with Libyans revealing the presence of a common situation of subalternity from a transcultural perspective.

In line with Viviani's style the music uses multiple elements, in this case borrowed from the Arab/North African and Neapolitan tradition underscoring a common root, the expression of a 'Mediterranean hybridity': melisma, chromaticism, fast scales, embellishment, as well as modes and percussive rhythms are distinctive features of the song that make it sound Neapolitan and Arab (Scuderi 2010, 621 and Chambers 2003, 25). In the opening of the song the ostinato rhythm at the piano recalls the incessant drumming of North African percussions.[7] In correspondence with the first stanza, the appearance of a repeated Neapolitan sixth chord highlights the origins of the character as declared in the lyrics. In the interlude, instead, while the percussive rhythmic background disappears, the melody simplifies to a repeated playful motive based on three notes.[8]

Transculturality in Neapolitan song from the mid-1920s

Viviani's "'O tripulino napulitano" shares multiple elements with the repertoire of songs based on the imitation of characters from other cultures composed by a younger Neapolitan songwriter, Renato Carosone. I am referring specifically to four songs written in collaboration with Nicola Salerno (Nisa) in the 1950s: "Tu vuò fa' l'americano", "Caravan petrol", "'O Pellirossa", "Torero". While Viviani represents a model for Carosone, the works of the two musicians show significant differences. Both Carosone and Viviani's songs are connected to the tradition of the variety theatre drawing their characters from the *macchietta napoletana*, preserving the parodistic, humorous quality, the combination of singing and spoken monologue as well as the theatrical quality of the performance (Fuchs 2019, 5). Both songwriters, although in different historical periods, express a social critique: Carosone

against the "changing society influenced by capitalism, globalization and Hollywood clichés" (Baldacchino 2018, 15), Viviani against the precarious conditions of the lower classes. However, while Carosone's songs maintain a lighthearted tone through the lyrics showing a detached approach, Viviani, as typical of his poetics, explores the contamination of comic and tragic elements. Viviani's street vendor makes fun of Libyans but does not hide his difficult status of migrant in a foreign territory: he keeps fighting for his own survival but without abandoning his wit.

However, in our opinion, a substantial difference between the two musicians, is their different approach to the representation of the Other. In a recent article, Gerhild Fuchs defines "macchietta interculturale" Renato Carosone's depiction of individuals coming from other countries in "Tu vuò fa' l'americano", "Caravan petrol", "Torero" and "'O Pellirossa". I agree with Fuchs that in the lyrics Carosone presents otherness as divergent from and contrasting with the Self, providing a list of differences that highlight two distinct cultural identities therefore employing an intercultural approach, referring to the concept of interculturality as defined by Welsch (Fuchs 2019). The songwriter in fact looks at the foreigner with a parodistic, satirical attitude aiming to reinforce the Neapolitan identity through a failed attempt to imitate the other. If Carosone illustrates the Other as a distant Self, a fascinating unreachable 'alien' figure in a stereotyped manner, Viviani in the song object of our analysis pushes the boundaries challenging the concept of identity from a transcultural perspective. By setting the protagonist of the song in a foreign territory he makes him question his own identity: surrounded by the locals he feels threatened but he can still defend his cultural identity because of the advantageous relationship colonizer/colonized, however he lucidly acknowledges the existence of a common ground between his own socio-economic status and the Libyan's. As mentioned above, in the interlude of the song, the Neapolitan vendor in Tripoli unveils a shared condition of subalternity with the Libyans: they are both living in conditions of precariousness to survive hunger, experiencing unemployment and economic hardship ("Nun bastava 'a famma nosta / ce vuleva pure 'a vosta").

As observed by Gianpaolo Chiriacò, the dialogue between Neapolitans and Africans through music in the name of a common status of marginalization is one of the distinctive elements of Neapolitan music production starting from the mid-1970s (Chiariacò 2019). The expression of a common experience of subalternity and racism for Southern Italians and Africans is the main topic of Pino Daniele's "Nero a metà" ("Half Black"), Almamegretta's "Figli d'Annibale" ("Hannibal's Sons") and later 99 Posse's "Cuore nero" ("Black Hearth"). From this perspective, Viviani can be considered a precursor to a transcultural aesthetics in Neapolitan song.

Conclusions

In the present article I intended to demonstrate that Viviani's "'O tripulino napulitano" can be considered an original testimony of how Italians perceived Libyans during the colonial

period and how they renegotiated the opposition Other/Self through a closer contact with the Mediterranean population. Furthermore, I aimed to prove that the song anticipates certain features of Renato Carosone's work based on the representation of individuals from other cultures. However, while Carosone's lyrics present a dichotomic opposition Other/Self, Viviani offers a transcultural approach proclaiming a common condition of subalternity between Neapolitans and North Africans, a topic that emerges in later Neapolitan works from the mid-1970s.

Probably inspired by his visit to Tripoli, the capital of the northwestern region of Italian colonial Libya, Viviani realizes a parodistic representation of a Neapolitan street vendor in a North African territory at that time considered an extension of the motherland. The songwriter draws his inspiration from the variety theatre genre of the *macchietta napoletana* preserving the typical brisk change from singing to speech while giving a more central role to the music employed to describe both the setting and the characters. The lyrics feature the use of colonial stereotypes common in the collective imaginary of the time. In particular it insists on the reinforcement of the colonizer's identity by undervaluing the Other's: supported by his pretended superiority as colonizer the character offers a racialized negative critique of the behavior and costumes of the Arabs ("Nu diece è 'nzevuso fa 'o grande a cavallo / Cu tanta mugliere fa 'a vita d'o gallo"). Furthermore, in the interlude he expresses the Italians' frustration towards colonial Libya, a territory initially presented as a promised land, an answer to domestic demographic and economic problems but that revealed itself to be a "big sand box" for its vast desertic areas difficult to cultivate. However, the dichotomic relationship Self/Other as well as the anger against Libyans comes to a rest in the acknowledgment of a common status of subalternity that they share with the Arabs: both need to live off expedients to survive hunger.

Additionally, our interest in Viviani's song from 1925 resides in the presence of common ingredients with a later tradition of well-known, internationally-acclaimed Neapolitan songs. In the 1950s the younger Partenopean musician Renato Carosone wrote several songs based on the representation of individuals form other cultures, namely: "Tu vuò fa' l'americano", "Caravan petrol", "'O Pellirossa", and "Torero". Living in a period that witnessed rapid changes in Italian culture and customs as they were exposed to foreign influences, Carosone expresses through his songs a social critique of the situation, ironizing the failed attempts to imitate other cultures and presenting the Italian/Neapolitan identity as strong and unalterable. While Carosone's characters are comfortably set in their own environment, in Naples or at home, Viviani displaces the Neapolitan vendor to a foreign territory, namely Tripoli, and brings him to question the opposition Self/Other by recognizing the presence of a common social condition. The condemnation of a shared position of racialized subalternity as well as precarious employment and emigration that connect Neapolitans to Africans will reemerge in the music from the mid-1970s, a phenomenon to which Viviani paved the way.

Endnotes

1 Isabella Abbonizio holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of Rome Tor Vergata. Her research interest focus on twentieth-century music and politics with a particular attention to the relationship between Italian music and colonialism during the fascist period.

2 I wish to thank Raffaele Di Mauro for directing my attention to the song during my doctoral studies and for his support and help during the elaboration of this manuscript. My gratitude goes also to Antonio Sciotti for providing the newspaper articles that document the enthusiastic reception of the first performance of Viviani's song in 1925, and of the comedy *I novantanove lupi*.

3 Giuseppe Volpi, Conte di Misurata, governor of the Tripolitanian region of Libya from 1921 to 1925. In May 1925 he undertook a 10-day automobile raid from Tripoli to the oasis of Ghadames and back, returning to Tripoli on the 30th of the month. "He was accompanied on this rather dangerous motorized journey by his wife and daughter, as well as an entourage of four guests that included General Rodolfo Graziani and his wife. […] twelve officers guiding four passenger vehicles and one equipment truck – which gave it the appearance of an organized military operation" (McLaren 2006, 3-4). It is possible that Viviani went to Libya on this occasion, invited to take part to the official celebrations for Volpi's enterprise. If so, one can assume that he wrote the song before his trip.

4 In the manuscript of the stage music of the play *I novantanove lupi* is printed the date of March 12th 1925. The document is preserved in the Lucchesi Palli collection of the National Library Vittorio Emanuele III of Naples.

5 The comedy *I novantanove lupi* was premiered at Teatro Politeama of Naples on Saturday May 23rd 1925. Cf. Anonimo 1 1925.

6 For a further analysis of the genre of *macchietta* cf. De Mura 1969 and Sommaiolo 1998.

7 Recordings of Libyan music circulated in Italy starting from the Italo-Turkish War. In the collection "Tripoli italiana" republished in the series *Il fonografo italiano*, the last track is a recording of a marching band from the city of Gharyan located in the south of Tripoli for "la festa del marabutto" and it is considered by Paquito Del Bosco, curator of the series, to be one of the very first Italian colonial folkloristic recordings (Del Bosco 1979).

8 The same motive is later used in the joke-like refrain of Carosone's "Io mammete e tu" ("Passiammo pe' Tuledo / Nuje annanze e mammeta arreto [...] Sempre appriesso cose 'e pazze / Chesta vene pure 'o viaggio 'e nozze").

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